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Synaeresis

arts + poetry



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Raven in Flowers – Joey Dean



Katarina Boudreaux

Acts of the Unknown

Mama stood on the chair
and reached for her magic book.

The leg was shaky,
but she knew how to balance,
her left foot heavier than
her right.

Book in hand,
she smiled at me,
the spoons in
my hands wands
against empty pots.

I remember her this way,
never quite
touching the ground,
her face the beginning
of everything new in my world,
before she left one morning,
a plate of biscuits
still warm in her hands.

Between the Keys

Before the bar fight
that slit the tendon
on your piano hand,
we laid side by side
in the rust of an
abandoned truck bed
beyond the lights
of civilization,
hands almost in touch,
scouring the sky
for shooting stars.

Music followed us —
a dog barked in perfect
three-quarter time
with the alternating cloud cover
while the constellations
called our names
and we happily listened.

We had no masters
then, only dreams

as endless as the sky
we made our communion
beneath, and that
almost-touching
that never reached
beyond the cracks
of all our keys,
played, unplayed.

Katarina Boudreaux is a New Orleans author, musician, dancer, and teacher. Her first novel *Platform Dwellers* is available from Owl Hollow Press. *Alexithymia* is available from Finishing Line Press and *Anatomy Lessons* from Flutter Press.

John Grey

Regarding the Town Founder and the Town Drunk

Seven a.m. on a chilly Sunday morning in November,
they stare down each other across the dew-tipped green.
One's equestrian, the other's on foot.
One wears a tri-corner hat, the other's bareheaded.
Curiously, they share a last name
though one has it chiseled
at his base and the other scratches his skull,
can't quite remember it.
One's made of marble, the other of yellow flesh
and shaky bone.
Both, at least, don't mind the bombardment
from the local pigeons.
Without the one, there'd be no town.
Without the other, my old man would be the biggest
drunk hereabouts.

In Need of Rescue

By the time rescue reached her,
she was cold.

All the CPR they could muster
couldn't budge a heart or lung.
It was a heavy rock
the three men lifted onto the stretcher,
covered with a sheet.

The other party guests
were a mix of sorrow and disbelief
and the few too stoned
to recognize death from life
who indulged themselves
in chilly laughter.

Two guys grabbed the weight,
prepared to hoist it down
three flights of stairs.
A third couldn't stop
staring at the other faces.

Rescue didn't stop there.
One turned to nightmares,
a second to drink,
a third to his daughter
breathing on her own.

Train Ride

Like a leash-stretching dog set free,
the locomotive shunts forward a little,
picks up speed and then, in a pulsing
breath or two, has bolted.

The porter is a blur.

The platform, a treadwheel in reverse.

My starting point doesn't even try to hold me.

Not now, as this train taunts the highway it parallels,
cruises by the best the automakers have to offer.

Like this sports car,
foot to the accelerator no doubt,
and wheels spinning two to our one
but it could be braking as it recedes
beyond the backward stretch of my neck.

Mile after mile,
we zip by every near thing
and gradually haul in the far.

Factories, small towns, stations, farmland,
are trapped and released.

Trees are flung rearward unmercifully.

Hills fall behind at an indiscriminate rate.

So do fences. So do houses.

The pattern is clear by this.

Sit facing forward and passengers
get where they're going
quicker even than the world.
No need to feel guilty.
This is as much a train of thought
as the 7.20 out of Chicago.
My mind embraces a rush without reasoning,
its tension released
by the click and clack of wheels on steel,
a rush without reasoning,
adaptable according to a swiftness,
that hums the landscape
into a montage of motion itself,
and yet something so strangely still
if my comfort is any judge.

Speed reels me toward the horizon on threads of silk,
rhythmic movement as just about everything
my subconscious says it is –
more breeze than what the air can devise,
more liquid than the river we cross,
a flock of migrating birds,
an arrow on target,
unhinged, almost flying,
reducing the surface to serfdom.

We spread our circles across the landscape.
The earth's curve flattens.
Geography can't compete.
Only the braking for a station can stop us.
And that too is a miracle,
reminding me how I've stayed in my seat
and yet the place keeps changing.

Oh yes, I too need to be some place.
But it's far better not to be there yet.

Regarding Current Programming

Animal Planet has changed
and so has he.

No more cuddly dog shows.

No cute animals
and their zoo-keepers.

Once they'd sit together,
enjoy the life-cycle of the koala
or the mating ritual of sloths.

But now the programming
is all sharks and big cats,
hyenas and crocodiles.
If a zebra or a wildebeest
is not being ripped to shreds
then he can't hide his boredom.
Unless, of course,
a python is swallowing a tapir whole.

She can't stand the blood,
the decimation of God's sweetest creatures.
So she no longer joins him
on his violent trawl through the animal kingdom.
She makes her excuses,
some of which have keen eyesight and sharp teeth.

So she watches the Food Channel,
keeps up to date on the latest recipes
for cakes, chicken a la king and lasagna.
But even in the world of beef stew and Caesar salad,
ratings need a boost.
Next up is a show on
how to kill game and eat its flesh raw.

Upstairs or down,
no rapport with the wild,
no making magic in the kitchen,
the best you can hope for
is to be at the top of the food chain.

John Grey is an Australian poet, U.S. resident. Recently published in the *Homestead Review*, *Harpur Palate* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in the *Roanoke Review*, *Hawaii Review* and *North Dakota Quarterly*.

Colin James

Rent-A-Face

We can have a structure
up in a few days.
Stay away from the windows,
there is something about the light.
Dark is good.
Basements, closets, some attics.
Swelling is also normal
but not encouraged.
We suggest positive thoughts like
you are walking down a long corridor
with blacked out windows.
You come to a recess or nook
where the person of your dreams
is doing your taxes.
He or she is glad to see you.
We have a few others
but not as good.
Your rate of recovery
will depend on your lineage.
Keep in mind,
suffering is blood,
blood is suffering.

Colin James has a book of poems, *Resisting Probability*, from Sagging Meniscus Press. He lives in Massachusetts.

Koi – Joey Dean



Watch Me Weep – Joey Dean



Joey Dean is an illustrator and mixed media artist from Hamilton, Ontario. He commonly uses traditional illustration mediums and then digitally manipulates it. Dean is also an abstract painter, as well as creating humorous LGBTQ+ apparel.

Carrie Connel-Gripp

It Takes A Village

It was the first day back to work following maternity leave, and everything went wrong. The person who had done my job for a year messed up my filing system and let so much slide, that my manager blamed me for being behind on multiple deadlines. I tried to stand up for myself saying that I was not the one who hired my replacement; you can imagine how that went over. I worked through my lunch and had to stay a bit later just to get a handle on what needs to be done the next day. It was a day from Hell and all I wanted was to pick up my little girl from daycare and return to the sanctuary of our home.

As I drove into the parking lot of the One Village Education Institute, I noticed there were no other cars with parents picking up their children. My phone showed that it was just a few minutes past five o'clock. I got out of the car and walked quickly to the front door, almost afraid it would be locked. It opened easily and I stepped into the gloom. I had taken my daughter, Clarissa, to the first room inside the door this morning and I went directly there. The room was empty and I felt my anxiety start to increase. Then I heard crying and let out my breath; I hadn't noticed until that moment that I'd been holding it.

I walked over to the far corner which contained a play kitchen. With my hands out in front of me, I went

around the half wall and saw not my daughter but a little boy sitting on the carpet. When he spotted me, he stopped crying, raised his arms as I lowered mine to my sides. I was startled by a voice behind me.

“Oh, good. You’ve finally arrived. I really need to get out of here so let’s be quick.”

I turned to look at the woman, a different one than was here this morning. “This is not my child.”

“What?” She came to peer into the play area. “Well, he’s the only one here. Pick him up. Let’s go!” She walked over to the door, switched off the lights.

“No,” I said. “Where is my daughter, Clarissa?” The child began crying again.

“It doesn’t matter. You dropped one off, you pick one up. It doesn’t make any difference which one you get.”

I was flabbergasted. “Of course, it makes a difference. I’m not going to take home someone else’s child.” I dug in my pocket for my phone. “I’m calling the police.”

She was beside me in an instant. “No, you’re not.” The woman wrapped her fingers around the phone in my hand. “Obviously, you didn’t read the contract you signed, which states: ‘The management does not guarantee that the child you drop off at the Institute will be the same one you pick up from this establishment’.” She pointed at the boy. “Now, take him home, bring him back in the morning. If you are earlier tomorrow, you just might get a girl.”

I picked up the boy, tried to calm him through my own tears. The woman escorted me out of the building and to my car. She watched as I put the child in Clarissa's car seat, adjusted the straps to fit him, and climbed into the driver's seat. She was still watching as I started the car and pulled out of the parking lot. There was much crying on the drive home, mostly by me as the boy settled and dozed off. I calmed myself down by the time I drove into the driveway of the duplex I rented. Before I took the boy out of the car seat, I needed to know his name. The Institute had insisted that each child have their first name engraved on an ID bracelet. I pulled up his left sleeve, found the bracelet.

"OK, William. Let's see what you need." I took him out of the car and brought him into the house. I did everything for him that I would have done for my own child: bath, fresh diaper, dinner, and story time. I put him to bed in Clarissa's crib.

I dug the contract out of the desk drawer where I had put it months ago. Of course, I read it, was positive I had read the entire thing word for word before I signed. The section the daycare worker quoted jumped out at me. Hell, it was even in a bold font and underlined. Why hadn't it registered with me? The Institute came with the highest recommendations from people I knew, particularly my friend June. I dialled her number and when she answered, I blurted out the situation, tears flowing.

"Take a deep breath, Susan," June said. "Feel better now?"

“What do I do?”

“You enjoy the opportunity you have to experience many different children, that’s what you do.”

“But what about Clarissa?”

“Oh, you’ll see her again sometime. You’re part of the Village now.”

I did something I’ve never done before in my life: I hung up on June. My mind whirled with all the “what ifs” and horrible scenarios dug up from my subconscious, every parental fear crashing down on me. I calmed myself as I remembered the vetting process I had experienced, the psychiatric and other testing, knowing that the other parents had to have gone through it also. I eventually fell asleep in the early hours and the alarm on my phone woke me at six.

I dressed and got William up, putting him in the same clothes from the day before; I couldn’t very well put him in one of Clarissa’s dresses. I fed him breakfast, then we got in the car and I drove to One Village. I took William into the room. We were the first to arrive. I waited until I was asked to leave. Outside, I called in sick to work and I sat in the car, watching as vehicles came and went, each disgorging a child or two, sometimes three or more. But I didn’t see Clarissa. Maybe she was sick or had an accident. And what if ... I pushed the thought away.

Close to noon, a van pulled up to the front doors. Something told me this was it and I got out of my car. A man and a woman dressed in blue scrubs and white lab coats exited the van. The man opened the side door

nearest the building entrance. I watched as the woman assisted a set of twins about three years old down from the van and took them inside. The man entered and a moment later he exited with Clarissa in his arms. He took her inside then I watched him and the woman come out, climb in the van and leave. I went inside and stood at the door to the classroom allowing my eyes to adjust to the light.

“Well, you’re early today, aren’t you?” said the same woman from the evening before. “You get to take your pick.” She gestured to the room.

I walked to the centre of the room but couldn’t see Clarissa. I couldn’t explain why, but I was reluctant to call her name. “Pumpkin, where are you?” I said in the tone I reserved just for her. I heard a giggle. “Pumpkin,” I sang again. Very faintly I heard it, the sweetest, “Mama.”

I zeroed in on the play kitchen and saw brunette curls peeking out. I tiptoed over, “Pumpkin! I’ve got you!” She screamed her delight and when I picked her up her arms wrapped around my neck like she would never let me go. “I’m so sorry, honey. Never again. I promise,” I whispered. I turned and marched toward the door.

“See you tomorrow,” called the worker in the same tone I had used. “If not, we’ll find you.”

It’s been months now. They came close to finding us once, but I was able to shake them off. We are fugitives, my daughter and I, surviving day by day. I will never let Clarissa go again.

Carrie Connel-Gripp lives in London, Ontario, with her husband and two cats. She has a Master of Library and Information Science and a BA in English Language and Literature from Western University. Her short stories have been published in the first issue of *Synaeresis* and in the print anthologies *Fterota Logia 1*, *Tales From the Realm, Volume One* from Aphotic Realm, and *NOPE Horror Quarterly* from TL;DR Press. She's the author of two published books of poetry from Harmonia Press.

Shalom Galve Aranas

On Poetry and Love

There are times
I wish I could heal
in your arms.
The distance between us
is an emblematic rainforest,
the kind where I cannot
find you
beneath the trees.
Not hear you
from the calling of the birds.
It is the time for writing
because I have read too many books
on poetry and love.
There must be a healing

in the mountains fragrant
with rainwater and pungent
leaves on brazen trees
you have never met before.
There must be a healing to this
and I do not want to disturb you.
If mulch is fuel, what am I to you?

Shalom Galve Aranas is a freelance writer. She has been published in *The Blue Nib*, *Former People*, *Enchanted Conversations* and elsewhere. She is a loving, single mother of 2.

Bruce McRae

Don't Push Your Luck

Standing into danger, is the nautical term.
A drunken surgeon cutting close to the nerve.
Speed demons racing the lights in the rain.
A sword swallower succumbing to the gag reflex.
It's a difficult world out there.

Which is why I like to sit here quietly,
my back straight, hands folded in contemplation,
head slightly bowed, as if a penitent at prayer,
and with nothing to declare but my indifference.
I'm telling you, sugar wouldn't melt in my mouth.

Heads Up

A dazzling array of somethingness.
Ambiguity awry. Abstruse obfuscations.
A dumb show of light and vagaries.

And the anonymous multitudes in passing,
who don't give two figs for noise and passion.
Who are either indifferent or difficult to impress,
becoming adept at sidestepping the constant barrage
loosed upon the life-weary.

Those who know every crack in the pavement
but are blithely unaware of the stars.
Completely unsuspecting
their end is about to arrive.

Nobody saw this coming.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,400 poems published internationally in magazines such as *Poetry*, *Rattle*, and the *North American Review*. His books are *The So-Called Sonnets* (Silenced Press), *An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy* (Cawing Crow Press), *Like As If* (Pski's Porch), and *Hearsay* (The Poet's Haven).

Fallen Before Its Time

– **Andreas Gripp**



Rainbow Flower

– Pauline King Shannon (Pooks)



untitled – **Pauline King Shannon (Pooks)**



Pauline King Shannon is the artist, blogger, poet, photographer, and author known as **Pooks**. Her published book is called *Random Thoughts of an Alien Goddess*. From 2011 - 2015, Pauline was a New School of Colour artist and has had her art in approximately 25 art shows, including Up With Art (2012, 2014, & 2015) and the Twitter Art Exhibit (Orlando, Florida / NYC, NY / Stanton, Norway / Avon, U.K / Canberra, AUS). She is now an independent artist, and is the writer of the WordPress blog: *Pooks82 The Vault*. She lives in London, Ontario.

Andreas Gripp

Covenants

The socialists are gonna kill me.
This isn't literal, or it might be,
it depends on how much I've had
in ratio of Tequila to Twitter,
of Instagramming crosses
and Bible paper and red-slashing
their hammer-and-sickle icon
I refuse to march behind
when protesting the bulldozing
of sweat lodges and animal traps
I don't really like anyway –
only because I can't stand
humidity while the metal-mouthed,
teeth-clenched hanger-on of
furry limb (that would flee to liberty
if it only could) is innately cruel,
but then my Indigenous
brothers need to survive too
and who am I to Monday-sermon
them to the point of unfriending
and mute? And the traps aren't made
like that anyway, you say.

Point taken and Unist'ot'en is where
my spirit would stand if I had one

which Dawkins would scream is nonsense
if he were alive and would his ghost
admit he was wrong all along?

I shoved the sacred
tobacco in my glove
when an Anishinabek elder
offered it to me on a cold-as-fuck
afternoon and the tea I just had
failed to do its trick. It was his idea
and I'm ever one to acquiesce.
The sensation wasn't as grating
as expected – much less than the
Ashes of Wednesday that kick off Lent
and I cussed each and every day
after I boasted I'd give up the booze.
Even the Rector regretted his promise.

But I digress – the Soviet emblem
was nowhere to be seen
and I admire the strength of beauty
on the majestic, Mohawk
standard. Never a mascot. Ever.

Self-flagellants of Dutch descent
say fearless Joseph? Misunderstood.

The Pierogi was undercooked
and Stalin's chef, a Bourgeoisie.
If your ravioli-in-a-can
can't Italian, can Crimea
stay Khrushchev's gift?
"Holodomor is an American
Lie" but Ukrainians aren't Jews
so I can't accuse you of
anything. White-on-white isn't
racism and bigotry's a pun
on words.

I tapped along the way
to your exhibit, on Dundas,
'cause "innovation" is how it works
and the King is just a block around
the bender. You say it was meant
for *Pride*, that the mofo had mis-
gendered you, that the poets
are giving you a second chance
even if they barely glance.
Look at them, at the open mic,
how they're crafty
in their beer. My granddad too
wore plaid but his beard
was bottom-trimmed.

He should've gone electric.
The sons of Cossacks
killed him, y'know.

You told me once
you read my zines,
how collage was just a puzzle
high on glue. The horse-race went to
Paradigm, mine rabbit-slept, gun-
shy.

You're surprised I've grown
my hair, that I didn't
exchange the Fedora
for a line
of MAGA hats –
And how could I,
when the orange dotard's Kimchi
is P'yŏngyang-laced?
Elton John was forced to cringe
when *Rocket Man* was named.
Bernie Sanders shared
the credit
but Taupin wrote the tune –

feel the burn of your mis-
taken. I'll await
your wokened grovel,
the "I'm listening"
alit by torch. Apologies
unaccepted by the flash
of mob appeal.
And we thought
Frankenstein had it bad.
The flower-girl,
tossed in the pond
head-first, deleted
like a circumcision's
precision cut.
The director's lovechild
howls to this day. Even
Solomon would've cupped
his ears. Not David's
son but Ginsberg's muse.
It only goes to show
that the straitjacket
was unnecessary. A hairshirt
would've done.
But back to the woman
birthed by adultery

(according to the Enquirer,
'74): she'll get
a letter from the Queen
if she's Canadian,
at her centenary.
For both of them.
The border guards
are Sergeant Schulz
and the Wall is just a rubble
of Lego blocks, hidden in the
shags of golden carpet, like landmines
in Vietnam – even the caravans
of Juan Guaidó
won't risk it
just-in-socks.

I'll give them my shoes,
barely scuffed and the boy
who blacks them up
is as blonde as the village-damned.
Look into his eyes – closer.
They're not aglow, you see.
Nor Necronomicon demonic.
He's only reflecting sunlight
that shines on the bad
and on the good,

and I wanted to Jesus-quote
to show He's *still* the Son of God,
at least in my humble
summation of Truth.

You frothed and foamed
at the jaw
when you read my untimely
interview;
my slandering of academia,
that it's garish bafflegab,
their verse, *spouted*
by Commie demagogues
in cliques.

We cold-shouldered
each other for days.

When I creeped your profile
on AssFace, yours
was just as phoney
as the rest – quinoa/greens aplenty,
your obligatory bikini
pics from Cuba
(unless you were in Bayfield
all the while and had *filtered*
the beach to hell),

regurgitating gifs and memes
I've seen a thousand times already.
And. putting. a. period.
after. every. fucking. word. does. not.
make. it. profound.

You asked me if I checked you out,
your steamy summer selfies.
I say that sex with someone you hate
is the most thrilling of all,
that the feigning of love
is a reality deeper
than the secret spaces
of your body –
that no, I didn't look,
or if I did, I didn't imagine
us together. We'd tear at
each other's throats
and then pass them off as hickies.
I have breasts of my own –
what need have I of yours?
But that's from all the *faggot*
jokes I was forced to hear
in school. Whenever I whipped
off my top, I wondered
if it was true.

I'm in love with my wife.
As enticing as you think you are,
I'd never take the bait. But never
say never (again): we're Bond-
ed by lust and loathing.
When Belle & Sebastian
called it right, that
you want to be left alone
with Marx & Engels for a while,
I should've paused
before sharing the Gospel –
John's, Matthew's,
or from your favourite, Mao Tse-Tung
(though he'd never confess
the Christ). See, even atheists
bow the knee to some supposed
incarnation. When they placed him
in a state of State,
they might have brushed
his teeth at least. That's why he never
smiled, I tell you. When we think
we're all the same, then who is
beautiful?

Andreas Gripp is the editor and publisher of this magazine (not to be confused with *THIS* magazine). He stuck this new poem in here because he didn't want to wait months for another litmag to decide if it was any good (or if it even made it past their editors who take themselves too seriously and might find it offensive because they didn't read it carefully enough) and this way it gets in print really fast and exactly the way he wants it laid out without it getting fucked up which has happened on multiple occasions in the past. He probably swears more than he should and lives in London, Ontario, with his wife and two cats.

They're Gonna Put Me In The Poorhouse

– **Andrew Lawton**



The Record Keeper – **Andrew Lawton**



Keep On Motoring – **Andrew Lawton**



Shalom, Goodbye – **Andrew Lawton**



Saint School – **Andrew Lawton**



Late For Mass – **Andrew Lawton**



Andrew Lawton is a broadcaster, columnist and political commentator. In his considerably limited free time, Andrew photographs abandoned and shuttered buildings, documenting the history, decay, and even emotions associated with structures that have been all but forgotten. He lives in London, Ontario.

Howie Good

The Gathering

I go out into the yard for a smoke. There's just enough daylight remaining that shadows in the shapes of beasts and angels crowd around me. One or another of them says – in a weighty voice I feel in my body rather than hear – that it's raining plane parts from the sky. But all I can see when I look up is a pair of mourning doves returning to the white oak tree, and the wind moving in fits and starts through the leaves, and it's like the leaves get angry – scream and yell, and throw things, and slam doors.

The King Is Dead

The night Elvis died on the toilet he was a circus without wild animals. He kept begging for water in a faint voice. The people down there, they drink a lot of soda. Some share. Some are bossy. Some want the ice for themselves. Some carry many small rocks, or a shell, or one big stone. Then they get bored. They eat flowers, trees, and insects. It's new for them to eat rattlesnake and cactus. I didn't expect them to eat those. Maybe it's not important, like how the windows face west and can be too bright toward late afternoon.

Human Smoke

We're the snarling German shepherds. We're the guards in death's head uniforms. We're even the barbed wire fence with the "Achtung!" sign. We're the government warehouses where the shoes and toys of half a million murdered children are piled staggeringly high. We're the police that treat victims like they're suspects. We're the many people who just shut their windows and draw their curtains. We're this whole new thing going on with the weather, a fiery kind of rain that the ground can't seem to soak up. We're what fickle gods would want to be if they knew what they wanted.

Howie Good is on the pavement, thinking about the government.

Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews

Geologic

— from a painting by Jana Skarecky

Uluru,

The colour of Mars.

Face unbeauteous

And wretched.

You speak to me

Louder than any words.

Uluru,

Matriarch of the ages.

Each cleft and fissure,

A wrinkle etched deep,

The lesson of a million blows.

Oh Earth!

Ancestral mother!

Your native, ancient face

Marks this ever present now.

Uluru

Your height and girth
Are thrones of orphic myths,

Of how the world was made.

Your sun-baked skin
The colour of hemoglobin.

Indigenous body.
One with the soil.
You are wisdom!

Through your canyon
Limbs and sinew

The wind flurries dreams
Of starlings and asters.

Look up at the flannery of sun!
The moon and stars are in the sky

Gussying up your wizened frown
With the red of coral reefs.
The turquoise blue of oxygen.

Winter Play Day

Even the light this morning
Will not erase the butchery of axes.

Beneath the children's boots
Ice glazed snow shatters to jewels.

Frost reddened cheeks, swirls
Of laughter and scarves.

Monochromatic yellow, green & blue
Sort this bustle of life into teams.

Pinnies confer identity, denomination
With random insignia of colours and chants

And then the games begin,
As if the children were citizens
Of some newly coined countries
Jumping through hula-hoops,
Potato sack races and freeze tag,

In good faith. Obeying
Their designated captains.
Waiting for the whistle
To get set to start.

And I don't know if it's the pinnies
Or the way they all line up or kneel,
But as I watch, I do a double take.
A deja-vu. A memory intrudes.

Behind this field of snow
A tryst of powdered pyrite
Glistens instead in desert sand.

A radio voice announces
In the Levant, terror
Lays down a Caliphate.

A hundred Coptic Christians.
Japanese & American journalists
Are summoned to the games.

In rows, they acquiesce.
In orange overalls.

Down the street, here
Across the snowy yard,
A mom gets dinner ready.
Waits for her son to run through the door.

Time lapsed, the kitchen darkens.
The branch is a stencil at the window now.

The games were changed.
The captains were replaced.

They say the body twitches
Before collapsing
With the head gone.
They say the heart goes last.

Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews has written five collections of poetry: *The Whispers of Stones*, *Sea Glass*, *The Red Accordion*, *Letters from the Singularity* and *A Jar of Fireflies*. Nature and one's place in it, as well as memory and social justice are her muse. Her poems "The Red Accordion" and "Emerald City" were shortlisted for *Descant's* Winston Collins Best Canadian Poem Prize and *The Malahat Review's* Open Seasons Award respectively. In 2015, her poem "Ghost" received first prize in Toronto's *Big Pond Rumours* Journal Contest. Josie is the author of two non-fiction books: *How The Italians Created Canada* and *In the Name of Hockey*. She lives, teaches and writes in Oakville, Ontario.

Alligator Smile – **Andreas Gripp**

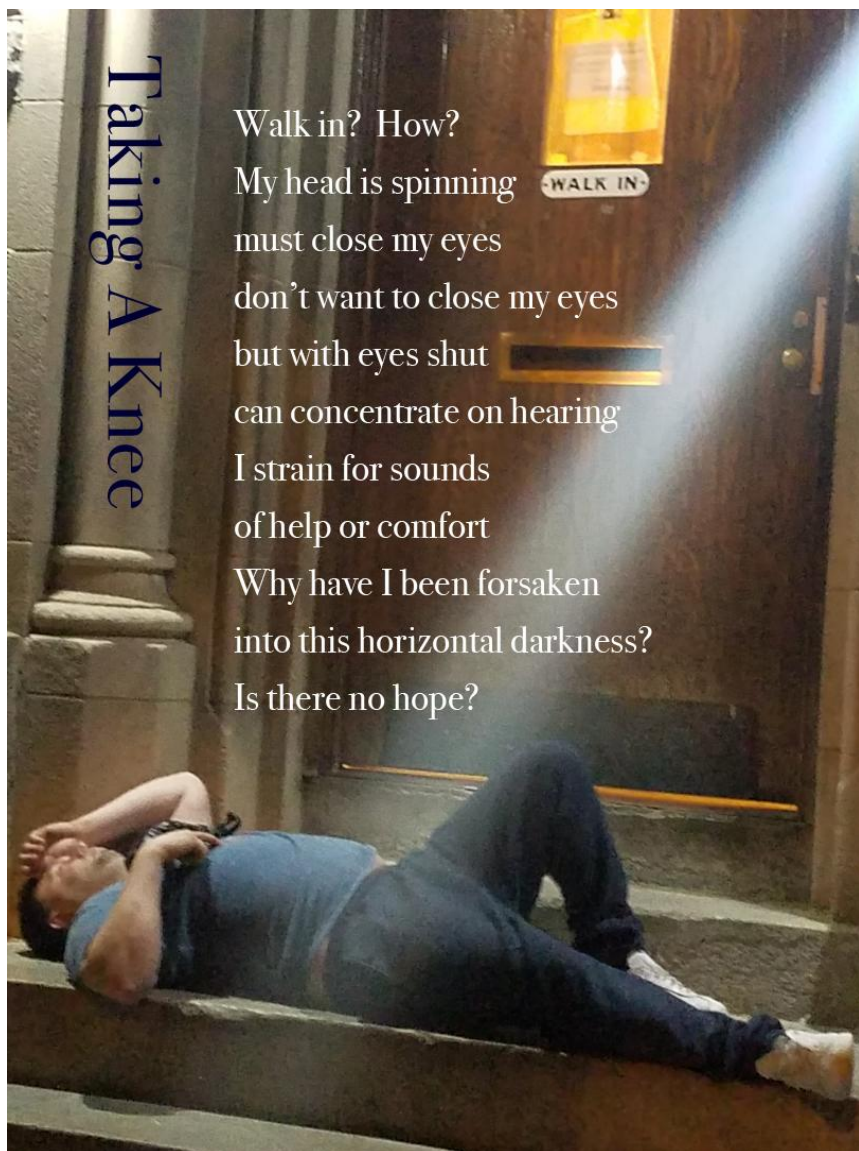


Frog Concerto – Mark Blickley



Taking A Knee

– Mark Blickley & Katya Shubova



Walk in? How?
My head is spinning
must close my eyes
don't want to close my eyes
but with eyes shut
can concentrate on hearing
I strain for sounds
of help or comfort
Why have I been forsaken
into this horizontal darkness?
Is there no hope?

Mark Blickley is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and PEN American Center. He is the author of *Sacred Misfits* (Red Hen Press), *Weathered Reports: Trump Surrogate Quotes from the Underground* (Moirra Books) and the forthcoming text based art book, *Dream Streams* (Clare Songbirds Publishing). His video, *Widow's Peek: The Kiss of Death*, was selected to the 2018 International Experimental Film Festival in Bilbao, Spain. He is a 2018 Audie Award Finalist for his contribution to the original audio book, *Nevertheless We Persisted*. Mark wrote the text for *Taking A Knee*.

Katya Shubova is a former competitive gymnast who grew up in Ukrainian Odessa. Her true passion is dance and she travels internationally to perform Tango. Although identifying as a dancer, for the past few years she has studied improvisational performance and sketch comedy at New York City's Upright Citizens Brigade. She uses her choreographer's eye as a visual artist to inform her love of photography. She will star in the upcoming short film, *Hunger Pains*, directed by Iorgo Papoutsas. Katya took the photograph for *Taking A Knee*.

John C. Mannone

Genealogy

I'm first in my generation
to *not* be born in Sicily
like my Papà from Palermo
and Mamma from Marsala.

My mother left the Old
Country with her parents
(to escape Mussolini's regime)
to Buenos Aires when seven

with intents to return. But
never did. My father and his
fourteen siblings came directly
to the United States

via Ellis Island in New York
with no intents to return.
After he was discharged from
the Army, he was naturalized.

Years later, he traveled
to Argentina, met my mother.
Eventually, I was born
in Montevideo, Uruguay

right on time at 3 a.m. on
a June 11th Friday, but
Daddy was late in registering
my birth with the Embassy.

I am a dual citizen. In 1970
I would have been drafted,
sent to Vietnam, but my June 12
birthday error kept me home.

Sometimes I pray in Greek
from a Koine Bible and thank
God for that. After my father
died, Mother married a Jewish man.

I learned I was Jewish (though
indirectly) from the Bible
but also from genealogy
that Italians have Jewish blood.

That might explain why
I love the Jewish people
and their lovely language.
I have known and loved

beautiful Jewish women
but in particular, a humble
man, who is said to have
visited Italy, but died

on a Roman cross in Jerusalem
a couple thousand years ago.

John C. Mannone lives in Tennessee and has work published in *Artemis Journal*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Poetry South*, *Peacock Journal*, *Baltimore Review*, *Pedestal*, *Riddled With Arrows*, *Eye to the Telescope* and others. He was awarded an HWA Scholarship (2017), won the Jean Ritchie Fellowship (2017) in Appalachian literature and served as celebrity judge for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (2018). He has three poetry collections: *Apocalypse* won 3rd place in the Elgin Book Awards (2017); *Disabled Monsters* was featured at Southern Festival of Books (2016) and *Flux Lines* (forthcoming by Celtic Cat, 2018). He edits poetry for *Abyss & Apex* and others. Website: jcmannone.wordpress.com

Gerard Sarnat

Marble Mountain Power Rangers (II)

Lavender skywriter just in from the coast
casts a mile long white bread and blue sandwich.
We nibble its plume like skittish wildebeest
fueling at watering holes in the garden of carnage.

Tracking a Garter snake's yellow squiggle into a succulent
micro-moss maze, I shrink as its ruby forked tongue
sucks my salt.

A toothless striped fly back from a million years
in Darwin's pin ball machine mimics a bumble bee sort of.
Tyger eyes camouflaged by gray flannel breastplates,
Silicon Valley angels promise to inject seed capital,
re-engineer killer-app stingers in a Blakean blink.

Son almost zenithed releases an orange umbrella,
rubs glossy stuff on my albino lips and closed lids.
Slaughterhouse tallow – yesterday's homemade candles –
I jerk up. Six-on-a-postage-stamp zebra moths stick
on the Barts Hand Salve tin,
mate on my nosethumbwatchband.
Satanic saucers stare me down –
I'm Rushdie's Butterfly Girl
enmeshed in a gossamer-wing chrysalis.

Fifth Of July

Time must slow down.
A face wave looks me in one eye.
Fire hydrants bust

nose spittle
through the Banzai Pipeline barrel.
Cool blue O'ahu surf

meditation – salt
explodes, like a
kid again for a few moments.

Gerard Sarnat is a physician who's built/staffed homeless clinics as well as a Stanford professor/healthcare CEO. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize plus Best of the Net Awards and is widely published in medical journals from Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Virginia Commonwealth, Johns Hopkins, and Wesleyan; and in literary journals such as *Gargoyle*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Review*, *MiPOesias*, *Blue Mountain Review*, *Canary Eco*, *Military Experience and the Arts*, *Brooklyn Review*, *San Francisco Magazine*, and *Los Angeles Review*. KADDISH FOR COUNTRY was selected for pamphlet distribution on Inauguration Day 2017 nationwide. "Amber Of Memory" was the single poem chosen for his 50th Harvard reunion Dylan symposium. Collections: *Homeless Chronicles* (2010), *Disputes* (2012), *17s* (2014), and *Melting the Ice King* (2016). Website: gerardsarnat.com

Pythagoras – **Clinton Van Inman**



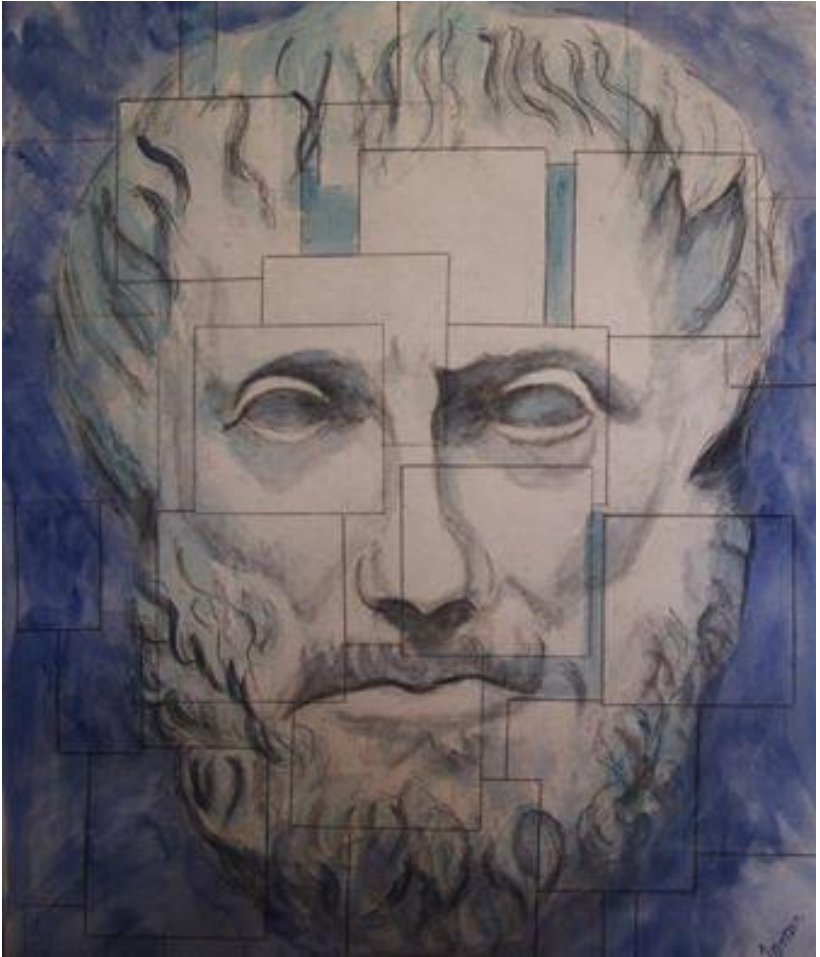
Pericles – Clinton Van Inman



Socrates – **Clinton Van Inman**



Aristotle – **Clinton Van Inman**



Born in England, **Clinton Van Inman** graduated from San Diego State University in 1977 with a degree in Philosophy. A Greek scholar, he is a retired teacher now living in Florida.

Monika Lee

A Visitor

A visitor can change everything
as can a day;

a tired house glows with towels and sheets,
fresh soap, nutloaf and spare key,
the small elation of saying hello.

A life can take new vigour
from pretending for the guest;
urged into cheer,
outward gestures become credible
resembling truth.

A visitor is
like sunlight peaking
after days of sleeting flurries,

can change the world forever
as can a day;

Mozart composed the Jenamy,
for a houseguest,
her visit became musical notes –
piano, horns, and strings.

A visit changed the form and
future of music.

Arrival of the mail, boiling of the milk,
each new thought or old one reconvened,
phones, alarm clocks, meals,
peanut shells and popcorn kernels
found in crevices of the couch
are also visitors,

write music to these,
or to your feet or hair.

Parturition

Breaks and births,
pain words in parturition,
ankles sprained
and Chronos.

At work I'm held beneath the water,
drowning faster when I struggle,
chewing a bleeding leg inside the trap.

I had strong teeth,
but my boss extracted them.
My molars sit inside her jewellery box.

We are neither stars nor satellites,
we are the firmament of time –
messengers of clock and sickle.

I tire but continue the pursuit,
ever falling, ever rising;
the wheel we climb circles round.

Monika Lee is author of *gravity loves the body* (2008), *skin to skin* (with Shelly Harder, 2016) and *slender threads* (2004). She has published poetry in *Canadian Literature*, *Vallum: contemporary poetry*, *Scrivener Creative Review*, *Windsor Review*, *Dalhousie Review*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *Harpweaver*, *A Room of One's Own*, *Event*, *Atlantis*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Antigonish Review*, *Ariel*, *Quills*, *Qwerty*, *Ascent*, and many other Canadian and international journals. Her play, "The Petting Zoo," was performed by professional actors as part of the Playwrights Cabaret at the McManus Theatre in London, Ontario. Also the writer of *Rousseau's Impact on Shelley: Figuring the Written Self* (1999) and essays on Shelley, nineteenth-century literature, Canadian literature, and creative writing, she is a professor in the English Department at Brescia University College in London, Ontario.

D.M. Kerr

A Day In Chains

There are hours in the day, weeks in the year, when my body floats free of the world in which I walk. In spring it does not bask in the mellow air; in summer the ochre of setting sun on city towers is only colour. The sweet timbre of a female voice brings it no joy. In these times the doors of chance are ignored, evaded and left unacknowledged, and only silence accompanies it into the long cold night.

On such a day I walked beneath a trellis of hue and song, yet great chains bound my chest tight. My eyes remained frozen in a cat's frightened stare. Life swept passed me like a primal river but the spot on which I walked was parched.

Someone talked to me. It was like talking to a tree—I was the tree. Perhaps in those words a door opened. I do not know.

Death brings life. Where there is no death, no pain, nothing but the dry earth, there can be no life. When the unremarkable binds me it sucks dry every cavity of emotion that permeates my unconscious. What is left is not even a struggle—for struggle is motion. The great engine has seized tight.

I worked today, but what work I did I don't remember. Any problem I approached skittered away. Equations bled dissolution; decimals did not round. When I stopped for a moment to tend the garden of elegance, sticks jabbed at me, saying: move on; these are not important places to be.

I ask: is any place important? But they only jab me harder, like unrepentant children complaining about injustice. I stop asking; I stop kneading the equations. The chains tighten further across my shoulders. I complete nothing for which I can be paid.

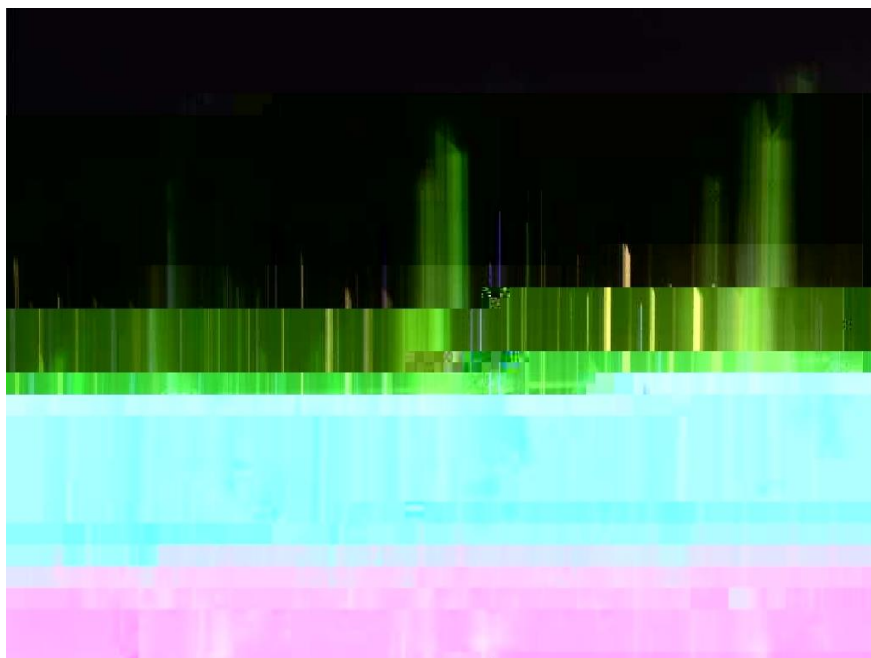
What is the meaning of this? Why am I doing what I do? When I ask, life does not care to answer. Perhaps I ask too softly, or life is nowhere near enough to hear. Its torrents flow past me, beyond the reach of my voice.

But I judge too roughly. The chains have left me unsure whether the one who talked to the tree, was it life? Perhaps she did open a door, and stood waiting on its threshold, a half-smile gracing her lips. Now, as the evening light fails, she has shut the door and stepped away from her house to walk long and deep into the night.

So this day has passed through of my consciousness like its food through my bowels. What I haven't absorbed has been washed away. I will never know, now, what I have missed.

D. M. Kerr is the nom de plume of a Canadian writer currently living and working in Singapore, where he teaches game design and business. His work has been published recently in *Founders Favourites*, *Nixes Mate* and the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library's *So It Goes* journal. He hates it when numbers don't round.

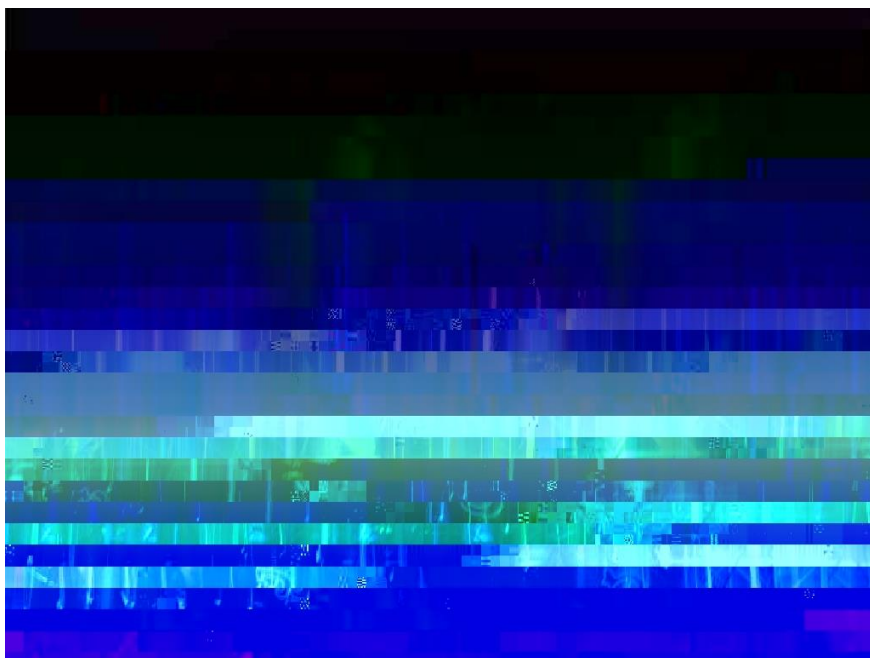
Refractions of Light I – Alexander Limarev



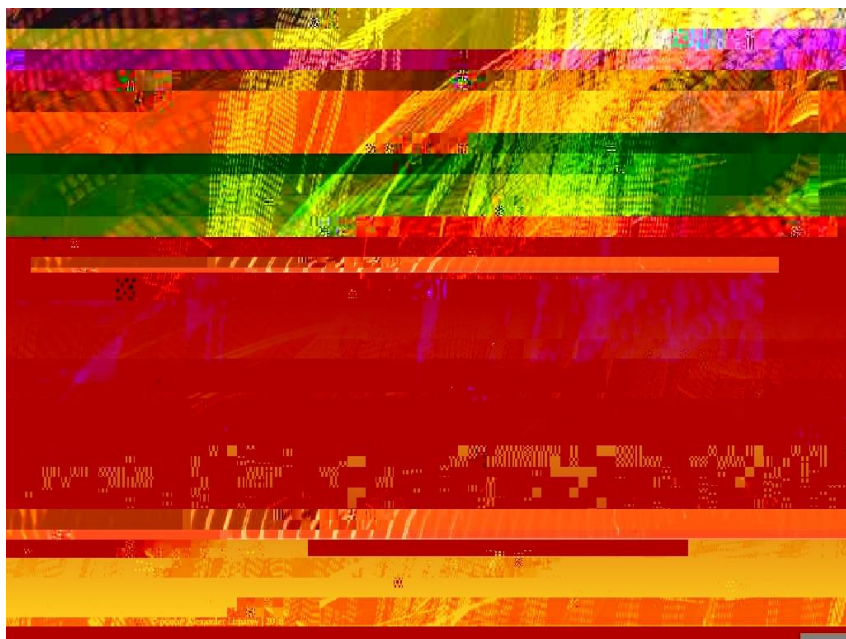
Refractions of Light II – Alexander Limarev



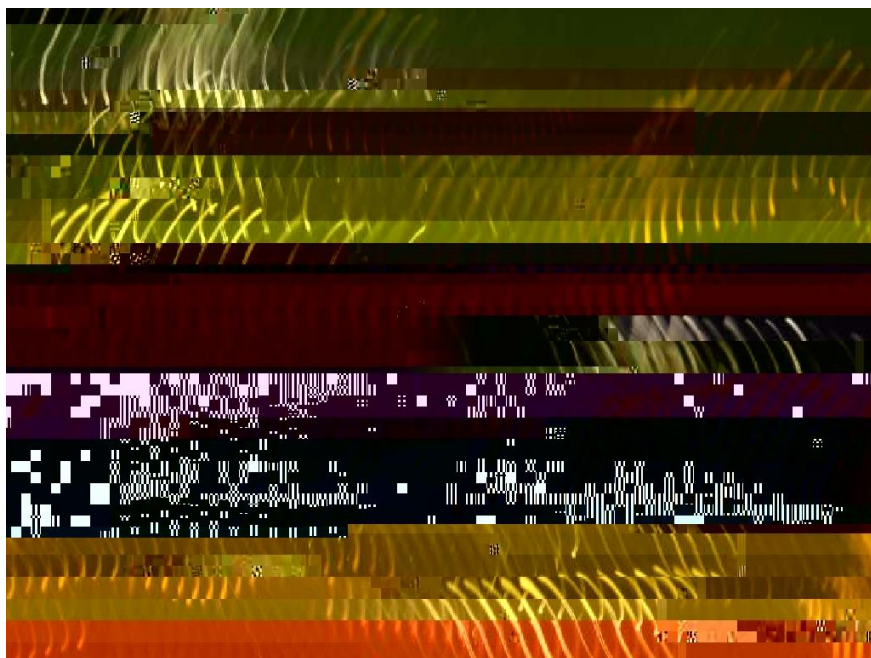
Refractions of Light III – Alexander Limarev



Refractions of Light IV – Alexander Limarev



Refractions of Light V – Alexander Limarev



Alexander Limarev is a freelance artist, mail art artist, curator, poet, photographer from Russia. Participated in more than 600 international projects and exhibitions. His artworks are part of private and museum collections of 62 countries. His artworks as well as poetry have been featured in various online publications including *undergroundbooks.org*, *Boek861*, *Killer Whale Journal*, *Bukowski Erasure Poetry Anthology*, *Nokturno.Fi*, *Simulacro*, *Zoomoozophone Review*, *Iconic Lit*, *Briller Magazine*, *The Gambler Mag*, *Caravel Literary Arts Journal*, *Metazen*, *Whispers of Soflay Anthology*, *Tuck Magazine Metazen*, *Degenerate Literature*, *Sonic Boom Journal*, *M58*, *Maintenant*, and a number of others.

“Artwork for me is the way to speculate upon and explain to myself such universal existential problems as a person’s life, double standards and their influence on individuals, public loneliness, social impotence, search of God, resistance to Evil. I think of my artwork as inner monologues developing over a particular thought or event and thus resembling nonsense, stream of consciousness in visual art, based on paradox, absurd, broken causative-consecutive and chronological connections, reflecting discrepancy, injustice of the outer reality. However, decorative artworks are a happy exception.”

David Haskins

en avant, en garde

Tuesday morning, 8 a.m.

Poets at the landfill scramble
through the effluent of the affluent
clawing for scraps of language
past their best before date.

One hauls away an old butterfly cabinet
and half empty boxes of Alpha-Bits
he'll sort out and pin in the drawers
in a fit of perspiration.

Another scores a Venetian blind:
with erasure in mind
she'll slip out slats to make a staff
for her swan song's notation.

A third scans the electronics bin
for letters of perpetual motion.

A tire-less CCM bike with a rusty tractor seat
drives a barn-full of clanking doodads
in a sound soup cacophony.

A Slinky lurches down a wordcase
spewing letters like lizards into a blue box.

"End ze tyranny
of ze left,"
the Academy vispers.

Torrents of screeners
in the race for space
send asemic genomes
somewhere over the rainbow.

It's all such fun
this Mad Max poetry
its fuel redacted
and firing pins removed.

David Haskins is the author of two books, *This House Is Condemned* (Wolsak & Wynn), a literary memoir, and *Reclamation* (Borealis), a collection of poems. His poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction appear in over 40 literary journals including *Oxfordian*, *Windsor Review*, *Great Lakes Review*, *Fiddlehead*, *Canadian Forum*, *Journal of Canadian Fiction* as well as in anthologies such as *Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry in the 21st Century*, *Saving Bannister*, and *Voices from the Niagara*. He has won first prizes from the CBC Short Story Competition, the Canadian Authors Association, the Ontario Poetry Society, and twice from Arts Hamilton. He lives in Grimsby, Ontario.



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photography (1 to 6 photos)

artwork (1 to 6 pieces)

Please email your submission as a separate attachment (MS Word/PDF/JPG). Please include a brief bio of yourself as well in case your work is selected for publication.

Email address: harmoniapress@hotmail.com

Response time is within one week. This is an *ongoing* call for submissions. When an issue has enough content to be released, work that is accepted for publication will appear in the subsequent issue.

There are no themes in *Synaeresis* other than exceptional writing and visual art. The subject matter is open, though please don't send in any work that is derogatory towards recognizable religious figures or anything that demeans a person's gender, orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.

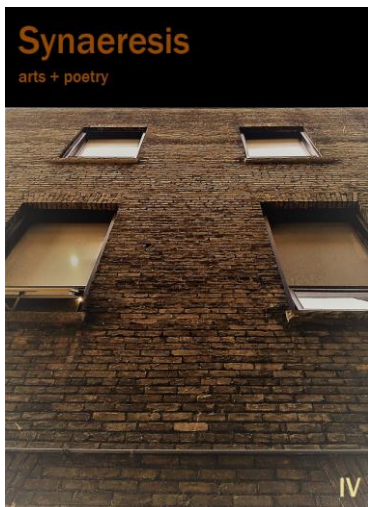
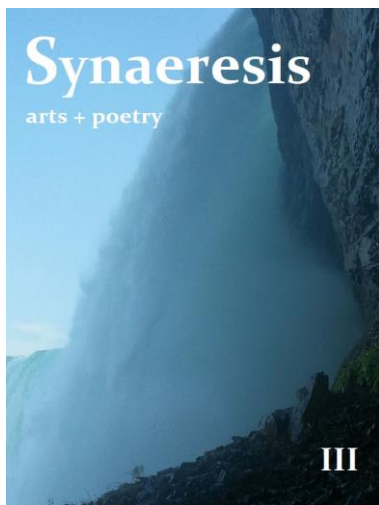
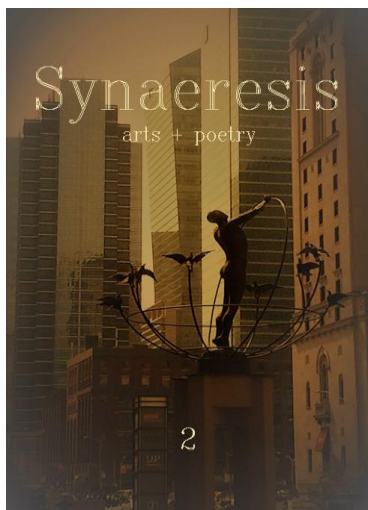
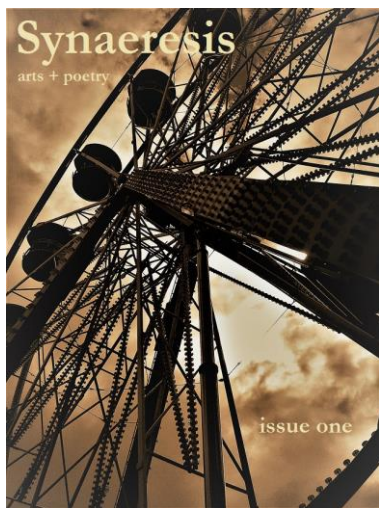
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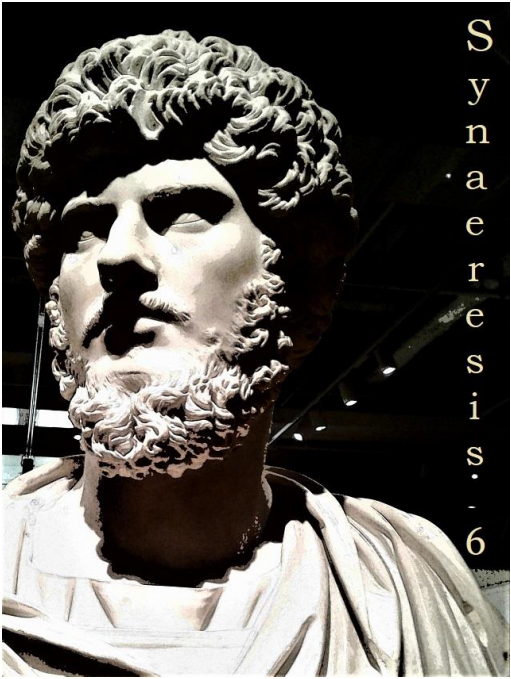
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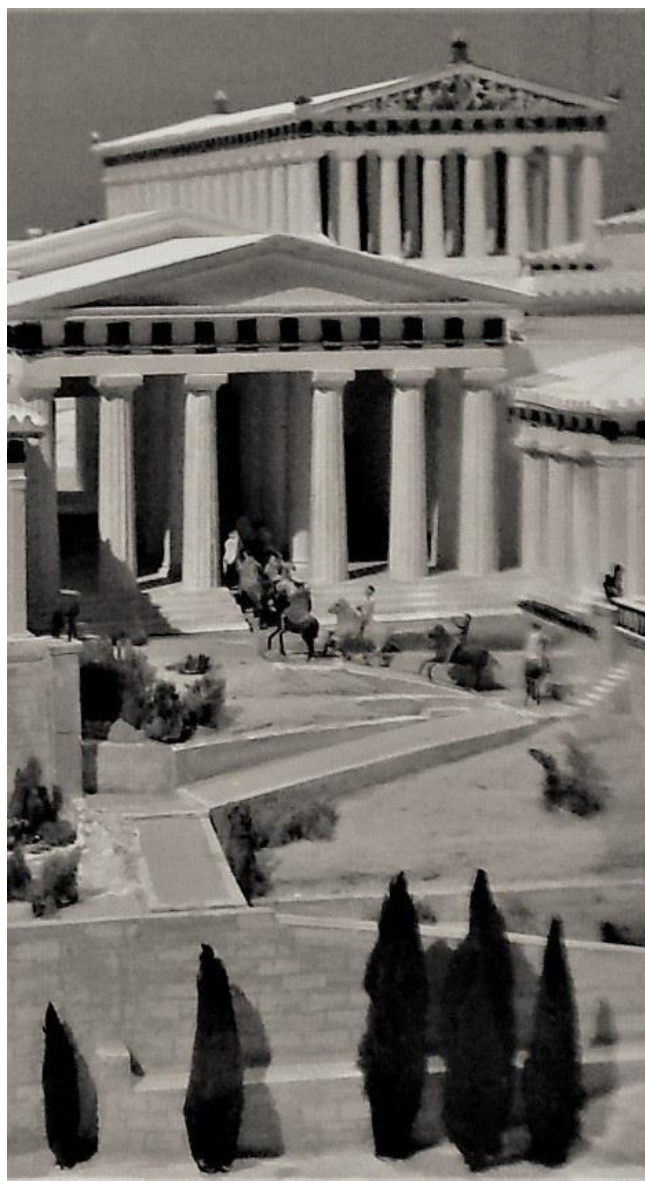
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